

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-3. Canceled.

4. (Original) A reciprocating engine comprising:

first and second ring grooves disposed adjacent to each other in a reciprocating direction of a piston and formed in a side surface of said piston;

first and second piston rings respectively fitted in said first and second ring grooves;

partitioning means for partitioning a space between said first and second piston rings into a thrust side space and an anti-thrust side space; and

communicating means for allowing the thrust side space to communicate with a combustion chamber,

said partitioning means having a hampering member disposed in said second ring groove so as to hamper mutual communication between the thrust side space and the anti-thrust side space through a gap created between a bottom surface defining said second ring groove and an inner peripheral surface of said second piston ring opposing said bottom surface.

5. (Original) The reciprocating engine according to claim 4, wherein said communicating means has a plurality of communicating passages provided in an inner surface of a cylinder, and is adapted to allow the thrust side space to communicate with said combustion chamber through said plurality of communicating passages.

6. (Original) The reciprocating engine according to claim 4, wherein said communicating means is adapted to allow the thrust side space to communicate with said combustion chamber when said piston is located in a vicinity of a top dead center.

Claims 7-22. Canceled.

23. (New) A reciprocating engine comprising:  
first and second ring grooves disposed adjacent to each other in a reciprocating direction of a piston and formed in a side surface of said piston;  
first and second piston rings respectively fitted in said first and second ring grooves;  
a partition to partition a space between said first and second piston rings into a thrust side space and an anti-thrust side space; and  
communicating structure to allow the thrust side space to communicate with a combustion chamber, wherein said partition has a hampering member disposed in said second ring groove so as to hamper mutual communication between the thrust side space and the anti-thrust side space through a gap created between a bottom surface defining said second ring groove and an inner peripheral surface of said second piston ring opposing said bottom surface.

24. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 23, wherein said communicating structure has a plurality of communicating passages provided in an inner surface of said cylinder, and is adapted to allow the thrust side space to communicate with said combustion chamber through said plurality of communicating passages.

25. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 23, wherein said communicating structure is adapted to allow the thrust side space to communicate with said combustion chamber when said piston is located in a vicinity of a top dead center.

26. (New) A reciprocating engine comprising:  
first and second ring grooves disposed adjacent to each other in a reciprocating direction of a piston and formed in a side surface of said piston, said first ring groove being located between a head end face of said piston and said second ring groove in the reciprocating direction;  
a first piston ring fitted in said first ring groove adjacent to the head end face of said piston;  
a second piston ring fitted in said second ring groove;  
a partition to partition a space between said first and second piston rings into a thrust side space and an anti-thrust side space; and  
communicating structure to allow the thrust side space to communicate with a combustion chamber defined by an inner surface of a cylinder and said head end face of said piston, said communicating structure having a plurality of communicating passages provided in said inner surface of said cylinder, being adapted to allow the thrust side space to communicate with said combustion chamber through said plurality of communicating passages when said piston is located in a vicinity of a top dead center, each said communicating passage being comprised of a recessed portion formed in said inner surface of said cylinder.

27. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 23, wherein said partition has a hampering member disposed in said second ring groove so as to hamper mutual

communication between the thrust side space and the anti-thrust side space through a gap created between a bottom surface defining said second ring groove and an inner peripheral surface of said second piston ring opposing said bottom surface.

28. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said second ring groove is disposed in the side surface of said piston such that said first ring groove is located between the same and the head end face of said piston.

29. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said partition has at least one pair of hampering members disposed in such a manner as to oppose each other along an axial direction of a piston pin coupling said piston and a connecting rod.

30. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said partition has at least one pair of partitioning members provided between said first and second piston rings, and said pair of partitioning members are disposed in such a manner as to oppose each other along the axial direction of said piston pin coupling said piston and said connecting rod.

31. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 30, wherein said partitioning members and said hampering member are disposed in such a manner as to be aligned in the reciprocating direction of said piston.

32. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 30, wherein said partition has a pair of urging members to respectively urge said pair of partitioning members resiliently toward the inner surface of said cylinder.

33. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 32, wherein said pair of urging members are respectively disposed in such a manner as to oppose each other along the axial direction of said piston pin coupling said piston and said connecting rod.

34. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 32, wherein each said urging member is formed by a spring.

35. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 30, wherein said partition has a pair of groove portions formed in the side surface of said piston between said first and second piston rings and recessed toward the inner surface of said cylinder, and said partitioning members are respectively disposed in spaces respectively defined by said pair of groove portions.

36. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said partition has a pressing member disposed in said second ring groove and adapted to resiliently press said hampering member toward the inner peripheral surface of said second piston ring.

37. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 36, wherein said partition has a pair of said pressing members opposing each other along the axial direction of said piston pin connecting said piston and said connecting rod.

38. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 36, wherein said pressing member is formed by a spring.

39. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said partition has a recessed portion disposed in the bottom surface defining said second ring groove and recessed toward the inner peripheral surface of said second piston ring, and said hampering member is disposed in a space defined by said recessed portion.

40. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein a ring gap of said first piston ring is disposed in said first ring groove such that said ring gap is located on a thrust-side space side with respect to said hampering member.

41. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein a ring gap of said second piston ring is disposed in said second ring groove such that said ring gap is located on an anti-thrust-side space side with respect to said hampering member.

42. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 27, wherein said hampering member is formed by a pin.

43. (New) The reciprocating engine according to claim 26, wherein said piston is coupled to said connecting rod using said piston pin, and said piston pin is provided in said piston such that a line connecting an axis of said piston pin and an axis of a crankshaft is inclined toward the anti-thrust side with respect to a line connecting a center of said piston and the center of said crankshaft.